(SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) and (b) Sir, the Government is not directly in the business of providing any telecom Service. However, the Government Companies, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), provide Telecom Services in the country. BSNL has launched the Cellular Mobile Telephone Service in Jammu and Kashmir on 20.08.2003 covering the cities of Jammu, Srinagar and Katra (Temple town of Vaishno Devi).

(c) The number of Cellular Mobile Telephone connections as on 30.11.2003 in Jammu and Kashmir is 2307.

(d) No, Sir.

Fixation of Tariff for Landline Services

964. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have given a free hand to the landline telephone operators to fix tariff for their services; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. As per section 11(2) of TRAI Act 1997, the power to fix telecom tariffs has been mandated to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) only and Government has no role in the matter. However, the TRAI *vide* 28th Amendment to the Telecommunication Tariff Order, notified on 05.11.2003, has forborne on prescription of tariff for basic service (other than ISDN), except for rural fixed line service, including WLL (Fixed). For rural fixed line subscribers, the TRAI has prescribed a Standard Tariff Package, within which service providers are permitted to offer alternatives.

Penalties for not fulfilling rural commitments

965. SHRI R.S. GAVAI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to levy access deficit charges and other penalties on the private service providers who are not fulfilling rural commitments;